



HISTORY ASSOCIATES INCORPORATED

5 CHOKE CHERRY ROAD, SUITE 280
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850-4004

PHONE: (301) 670-0076 FAX: (301) 670-2765
E-MAIL: HAIGEN@MCIMAIL.COM.

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Dear Participant:

Welcome to San Francisco and *Documenting the Digital Age*. To my knowledge, this is the first time that experts from the private and public sectors, specialists in digital technology, contemporary history, the law, and archives, have met to discuss practical methods of preserving the history and records of one of the most incredible advances in communications and information—the Internet. At the same time, we want to examine the ways organizations can protect, preserve, and use electronic records. I know it's a large order, but I expect that, with the caliber of people participating, we will learn more about the latest ideas on organizing and maintaining digital archives, agree on some common definitions, and establish some guidelines for future actions.

The origins of this conference started—where else—but in a series of e-mail messages initiated by Nathan Myhrvold last spring. "Save The Web!" he pleaded, noting that while the web wasn't very old, "the fossil record documenting its evolution is already growing very faint." He hoped that somebody was saving a web archive, but if not, then "Something Should Be Done." News of what Brewster Kahle was doing in California hadn't reached the east coast by then, so I took the concept for a conference to Bert Roberts at MCI, and then to George Strawn at the National Science Foundation. They liked the idea of bringing a diverse group of professionals together, especially folks who rarely talked to each other and often talked past each other when they were speaking. NSF, MCI, and Microsoft agreed to underwrite the costs of the conference, and the rest, as they say, is history.

I know that all of you have heard of the National Science Foundation, MCI, and Microsoft, but you may be wondering who, or what, in the world is History Associates. Founded in 1980, we are one of the leading professional historical, archival, and records management services companies in the United States. In addition to writing the history and organizing archives for several other corporations, History Associates established the MCI archives and wrote *The History of MCI, 1968-1988, The Early Years*, the first historical study to research, use, and cite electronic records, including executive e-mail.

I encourage everyone to participate fully in all the discussions. We have an opportunity to shape the direction in which ideas and resources can be applied to the enormous challenges we face with the explosion of electronic records. Our goal is to bring greater physical and intellectual order to the documentation of the Digital Age.

I look forward to working with all of you over the next two days and in the months to follow.

Sincerely,

Philip L. Cantelon
President